

Michigan  
Department  
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Services

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# Articles in Today's Clips

**Thursday, May 15, 2008**

(Be sure to maximize your screen to read your clips)

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Michigan Report

May 15, 2008

## **COURT ORDERS D.H.S. TO REUNITE CHILDREN WITH PARENTS IN GUATEMALA**

When the Department of Human Services creates the situation in which parents would be deemed unfit to care for their children, courts should not terminate parental rights on the basis of the state-created situation, the Court of Appeals said in a published decision released Wednesday.

The decision at had (*In Re Orozco Minors*, [COA docket No. 279461](#)) involves unique circumstances in which DHS, after taking custody of the children for suspected abuse, reported the parents, who were illegal aliens from Guatemala, to Immigration and Customs Enforcement.

The parents were then deported and the children remained in the United States in DHS' care.

Judges said it appeared that before deportation the parents had been attempting to reunite with their children, notwithstanding a lack of Spanish language services that caused language barriers in the process of reunification.

In light of the fact that the state never proved with clear and convincing evidence the alleged abuse or that taking the children was in their best interests, the state should have relinquished jurisdiction back to the parents before they were deported, the opinion said.

"If the family court had not continued to exercise jurisdiction over the children in this case, respondents would have been able to take the children with them to Guatemala, and there would have arisen no cause for termination of parental rights," judges said. "However, the court's continued exercise of jurisdiction made it all but certain that respondents would be permanently separated from their children and that respondents would become unable to provide proper care and custody.

Because the state kept the children, it caused the very desertion it then sought elimination of parental rights on the grounds of, something that other states' courts have forbidden, Judge Kathleen Jansen wrote in an opinion signed by Judges Pat Donofrio and Alton Davis.

"(DHS) was not entitled to seek termination of respondents' parental rights (under desertion) in this case because (DHS), itself, intentionally set out to create that very ground for termination," judges said, adding that the Connecticut Supreme Court has held that 'a state may not, consistent with due process of law, create the conditions that will strip an individual of an interest protected under the due process clause.'

Therefore, judges said, the parents in this case were denied the "fundamental liberty" of due process, something that is available to anyone within the country's borders, whether they are legal, illegal, here temporarily or permanently.

"We conclude that when the state deliberately takes action with the purpose of

'virtually assur[ing] the creation of a ground for termination of parental rights,' and then proceeds to seek termination on that very ground, the state violates the due process rights of the parent," appellate judges said.

Even if the lower court was correct in applying the desertion standard, terminating parental rights wasn't in the best interest of the children, judges said.

If they remain without their parents the children, who are currently native Spanish speakers, will lose all ties to their language, their country and their family, who they have clear bonds to, judges said.

And while DHS may have believed that it was best for the children, all but one of whom are US citizens, to remain in the US rather than live in Guatemala, that was a decision for their parents to make, not the state.

"It is undisputed that parents have a fundamental liberty interest in the companionship, care, custody, and management of their children," the opinion said in quoting the Supreme Court. "In order to comply with the guarantees of substantive due process, the state must prove parental unfitness by "at least clear and convincing evidence" before terminating a respondent's parental rights.

That's compared to the less stringent demand for removing the children from the home, which is proving by a preponderance of evidence that the environment is unfit.

Judges reversed the order to terminate the parents' custody and the state's jurisdiction over the children, ordering DHS to take immediate steps to reunite the children with their parents in Guatemala.

## Day-care death case goes to jury

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TRACE CHRISTENSON • *THE ENQUIRER* • MAY 15, 2008

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For a month, Ruthann Jarvis told police she didn't know how a baby at her day care center died.

Then she told investigators she caused the death of 5-month old Damien Lewis. "She dropped her head and began to cry," Michigan State Police First Lt. Shawn Loughrige testified Wednesday. "She said she put the pill in his mouth to help him get some sleep."

Jarvis had given the child an adult dose of Ambien, a sleeping pill, and doctors said it caused the child to stop breathing less than an hour later that morning on Sept. 26.

"I never meant to harm him," Jarvis told Loughrige on Oct. 30. "I did not mean to harm little Damien. "I should let someone kill me for taking the baby's life."

A Calhoun County Circuit Court jury heard from Loughrige, a forensic interviewer, on the final day of testimony in the second-degree murder trial of Jarvis, 49, of Springfield.

The eight men and four women deliberated just over three hours before ending the day at 6 p.m. without reaching a verdict. They return at 8:30 a.m. today.

Lewis died shortly after his mother dropped him at Jarvis' daycare center.

Jarvis first told police that she discovered the child was not breathing a few minutes after placing him in a crib. She began CPR and the baby was taken by ambulance to Battle Creek Health System where he died.

Doctors were unable to determine a cause of death until a toxicology report showed high levels of Ambien in his blood.

Confronted, Jarvis denied she gave the medication to the child.

"I didn't have any of that kind of stuff," she told Officer Kevin Callahan of the Springfield Department of Public Safety. "I would never do that because it would kill a baby. That is nothing you would give a child. I have watched babies all my life and I love babies and I would never do that to that little fellow."

She suggested that her estranged husband might have given the medication to the child to harm Jarvis because she wanted to divorce him.

But during an interview in Lansing with Loughrige, Jarvis confessed she placed the pill in his mouth because the little boy was fussy from teething.

Defense Attorney Ron Pichlik argued in his closing that Jarvis didn't know the consequences of giving the child Ambien because she would not risk her day-care business.

But Prosecutor John Hallacy then replayed the statements she made to Callahan that she would not give the child the medicine because she knew it was dangerous as evidence she understood the consequences and should be found guilty of murder.

*Trace Christenson can be reached at 966-0685 or [tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com](mailto:tchrist@battlecr.gannett.com).*



May 15, 2008

## Hearing postponed for Lansing man charged in child's death

### Midday update

*Kevin Grasha*  
*Lansing State Journal*

The preliminary hearing for a 21-year-old Lansing man charged in the death of his girlfriend's young child was postponed today.

Vincent Soto is charged with murder and first-degree child abuse in the death of 13-month-old Laycee Grace Johnson. The hearing, which determines if Soto will stand trial, has been rescheduled for June 19.

Laycee was rushed to Sparrow Hospital on May 6 after a man called 911 and claimed she had fallen and was not breathing. She died the next day.

The case is in 54A District Court before Judge Frank DeLuca.

Contact Kevin Grasha at 267-1347 or [kgrasha@lsj.com](mailto:kgrasha@lsj.com).

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## Muskegon Chronicle

### Driver arrested after plunge off embankment

Thursday, May 15, 2008

By Heather Lynn Peters

[hpeters@muskegonchronicle.com](mailto:hpeters@muskegonchronicle.com)

NORTH MUSKEGON -- A North Muskegon woman was arrested Wednesday night after police said she drove her vehicle over an embankment then fled the scene with her 7-year-old child. Police said Laura Christine Schmidt, 34, of 2774 Patricia, was driving a 1995 Chevy Cavalier around 6:45 p.m. when she drove through the intersection of Mitzi Avenue and Riverview Avenue, about a block from her home. Her child was a passenger in the vehicle at the time, police said.

North Muskegon Police Chief Thomas Korabik said once Schmidt came to the intersection -- rather than turning onto her street -- she continued south over an embankment, rolled the vehicle and fled the scene.

The vehicle came to rest against a tree, Korabik said. Neither Schmidt nor her child was injured in the crash. It was not clear this morning whether there was significant damage to the vehicle, he said.

Residents in the area called 911 and witnesses provided officers at the scene with Schmidt's address.

When officers arrived at Schmidt's home they discovered Schmidt had been driving while intoxicated and arrested her, police said. She was lodged in the Muskegon County Jail where she was being held on \$100 cash or surety bond.

Schmidt was expected to be arraigned today in Muskegon County District Court, a jail official said this morning.

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## KALAMAZOO GAZETTE

### **Making strides at Lakeside: Youth facility on the rebound after series of difficulties**

Wednesday, May 14, 2008

BY ROBERTO ACOSTA

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388-8557

KALAMAZOO -- A home for troubled youths that struggled through significant troubles of its own is reporting a string of successes just months after a top-to-bottom makeover.

Lakeside Academy -- formerly Lakeside for Children -- was closed in 2004 after repeated violent disturbances, had its license restored and closed again in 2006 with financial problems. Now it's growing again and earning praise for recent achievements.

"The Lakeside board could not be more pleased with what is happening," Amy Upjohn, Lakeview board president, said this week.

So what's new at Lakeside? Just about everything, including its name, its mission and its management team.

Last July, Lakeside, a nonprofit organization, signed a contract with for-profit Sequel Youth Services, which runs similar programs in Arizona, Iowa and Wyoming, and began anew. The Sequel program deals with young men ages 12 to 18 who have a history of anger and aggression, lack self-discipline or have poor coping skills, among other challenges.

That's a change from the previous focus on children with psychological and mental-health issues.

By September, Lakeside was licensed for 79 youths and had about 30 residents managed by about two dozen staff members. In February, Lakeside requested and received permission to handle 100 residents.

This week, the facility housed 93 residents -- including 88 from Michigan -- and has 78 staff members present. There is a waiting list of 13, and the board is considering additional growth.

Upjohn, board administrator Don Nitz and Travis Faulds, Sequel executive director at Lakeside, told editors and reporters at the Kalamazoo Gazette this week that the atmosphere at the 50-acre Oakland Drive campus is dramatically different from the tense times of just a few years ago.

"We're trying to get them (kids) out in normative culture," Faulds said. Students walk freely on campus and young men who have sometimes violent backgrounds are learning to work well together, he said.

Faulds highlighted one student in particular to showing what Lakeside can do for youths.

"A young man came to us who always wanted to fight, made threats and coerced people," Faulds said. By the time he left, he was a student leader. Now, at 17, the young man works part time at the facility and is talking about attending college, Faulds said.

"Being respectful, polite, caring for the environment and the community" are all part of the norms installed with the new program, Faulds said.



Under the new program, more than 98 percent of students have gone straight home and not into another program, he said. The average stay is six to nine months.

That doesn't mean there haven't been challenges. There have been two walkaways from the facility since it began anew, he said, but, "We've done a good job in minimizing those."

"We don't want to rely on handcuffs and fences," Faulds said. "We just have to be extremely vigilant in what we do."

In addition, boys in the program have:

- v Performed more than 50 community-service projects in recent months, from serving food at the Kalamazoo Gospel Mission to yard cleanup with the Oakwood Neighborhood Association.

- v Launched several athletic teams, including a prize-winning powerlifting team.

What's not new is the Lakeside board's commitment to helping children.

Upjohn said "the need is huge" in the community for a facility like Lakeside and the services it offers. "We are committed to doing this right," she said.

Upjohn said Lakeside is trying to help students go to college with its Kendall education fund. "If they are successful, even if they have left our program," Upjohn said, "we will do what we can to help them."

While Sequel runs the academy, "We are still raising money in the community" to fund operations, Upjohn said.

Most of the operations money comes from a \$170 a day per diem for each student from the referring counties.

Upjohn hopes the recent changes will "build the community's trust" toward Lakeside and increase donations, which have dwindled from about \$130,000 to \$150,000 a year to nearly nothing today.

Lakeside opened in 1907 as an orphanage for boys. In recent years it served abused and neglected children who had been referred by courts, Kalamazoo Community Mental Health & Substance Abuse Services and the Kalamazoo County Department of Human Services.

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# Hostage incident with 5 kids ends peacefully

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NICK SCHIRIPA • *THE ENQUIRER* • MAY 15, 2008

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ALBION — A two-hour standoff Wednesday morning ended with the arrest of 34-year-old Albion man who police said had holed up in a house with five children.

Albion Public Safety Director Eric Miller said the man's 30-year-old girlfriend ran into the police station around 5:30 a.m. Wednesday and said her boyfriend had physically assaulted her and shot at her with a handgun in the bedroom.

The woman left behind her five children, between the ages of 2 and 10, in her rental house at 701 S. Superior St. in downtown Albion, and said she was warned not to bring the police back to the house or she and her children would be killed.

The names of the suspect, the woman and the children were withheld by police on Tuesday, pending the man's arraignment, which is scheduled for today in the Calhoun County 10th District Court in Battle Creek.

Miller said the couple had three children in common — a 2-year-old and twin 5-year-olds.

Around 7:20 a.m., Miller said, the two older children were allowed to board a school bus.

"Because he did allow the two older children to go to school, that was a positive sign for us," Miller said.

The bus was stopped, and the two older children were reunited with their mother unharmed, Miller said. Around 7:30 a.m., the Albion Department of Public Safety Emergency Response Team surrounded the house and closed several streets around the house.

About two hours later, the man emerged from the house, unarmed, and surrendered to police. The three children remaining in the home also were returned to their mother.

Miller credited his officers, as well as those who responded from the Battle Creek Police Department, the Calhoun County Sheriff's Department and the Sheridan Township Fire Department, for an uneventful resolution to the incident.

"They did a tremendous job. They responded quickly, took control of the situation, took control of the area," he said. "I'm very happy with assistance we got from outside agencies, just thrilled this came to a positive conclusion."

Many details about the man were unavailable shortly after the incident, but Miller said the man had been arrested before and he had a history of domestic violence.

The children were not injured and the mother suffered no serious injuries, Miller said. A gun was recovered inside the home, and police had recovered a bullet and casing.

Nick Schirripa can be reached at 966-0692 or [\*nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com\*](mailto:nschirrip@battlecr.gannett.com).



## Police: Standoff ends with father who threatened kids

Thursday, May 15, 2008

After nearly two hours of negotiations, police on Wednesday said they arrested an Albion father who had threatened to kill his children and girlfriend and would not come out of his home.

No one was harmed, and the man was to be arraigned today in Calhoun County District Court in Battle Creek.

He told his live-in girlfriend as she ran from him Wednesday morning that he would kill her and her children, two of whom are his, if she brought police to the house, according to an Albion Department of Public Safety news release. It was unclear how many children were in the house.

The man said this after he shot at the woman with a handgun and missed, according to the release.

She fled to the public safety department about 5:30 a.m. and reported the threats.

Officers then watched the house, where the children remained, until some of the children boarded a bus and went to school.

About 7:30 a.m., the department emergency response team surrounded the house at 701 S. Superior St., spoke to the man and began negotiating with him to come outside, according to the release.

About 9:15 a.m., he left the house with the children who did not get on the bus.

-- Staff report

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# Man accused of setting girlfriend on fire pleads no-contest

Grand Haven Tribune

May 14, 2008

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MUSKEGON HEIGHTS (AP) — A Muskegon Heights man accused of setting his girlfriend on fire has pleaded no contest to assault with intent to do great bodily harm.

Police said 34-year-old Shannon McGee argued with 29-year-old Ayonna Williams Dec. 22, accusing her of infidelity. Police said he punched her, doused her with rubbing alcohol and lit it. She was hospitalized for burns on her face and legs.

Police said they caught McGee on Jan. 4 by tracking his cell phone to an attic hideout.

Muskegon County Circuit Judge James Graves Jr. will sentence McGee May 27. A no-contest plea isn't an admission of guilt, but is treated as one for conviction purposes.

A Muskegon County jail supervisor said McGee was in custody Tuesday.

# MORNING SUN

## Man charged with trying to kill his mother

By LINDA GITTLEMAN  
Gratiot Managing Editor

A 19 year-old Bannister man has been charged with trying to kill his mother.

The preliminary exam for Jeremy Christopher Fall, scheduled for Wednesday, was postponed until May 28.

Fall has been charged with assault with intent to commit murder and two counts of assault with a dangerous weapon, said Gratiot County Chief Assistant Prosecutor Kristin Bakker.

On April 14, Fall was a passenger in a car driven by his mother, Karen Brown, 38. They were arguing about money, Bakker said. Fall allegedly wanted his mother to loan him money.

While traveling on Ransom Road in Elba Township, Fall is alleged to have struck his mother on the head with a full soft drink can.

The woman stopped the car and got out.

"She had to get away," Bakker said.

Fall then is alleged to have moved into the driver's seat and attempted to run her down.

He was arrested right after the incident and charged with domestic violence at first, she said. But following an investigation and interviews with the witnesses, Bakker said she withdrew those charges and filed a new charge of assault with intent to commit murder.

According to witness statements, Brown had to jump into a water-filled ditch in order to avoid being hit.

Fall has been charged with domestic violence in the past, she said.

Assault with intent to commit murder carries a maximum penalty of life in prison. Assault with a dangerous weapon carries a four-year felony.,

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May 15, 2008

## Congress passes farm bill, defying Bush

By MARY CLARE JALONICK  
*Associated Press*

WASHINGTON — Congress sent the White House a huge election-year farm bill today that includes a boost in farm subsidies and more money for food stamps amid rising grocery prices.

Bush has threatened to veto the \$290 billion bill, saying it is fiscally irresponsible and too generous to wealthy corporate farmers in a time of record crop prices.

But Congress disagreed, passing the bill by overwhelming margins in both chambers — enough to override a veto. The Senate vote was 81-15, a day after the House approved it with 318 “yes” votes.

About two-thirds of the bill would pay for domestic nutrition programs such as food stamps and emergency food aid for the needy. An additional \$40 billion is for farm subsidies, while almost \$30 billion would go to farmers to idle their land and to other environmental programs.

Agriculture Secretary Ed Schafer again criticized the bill after Tuesday’s House vote, saying it has the wrong priorities.

“It does not target help for the farmers who really need it, and it increases the size and cost of government while jeopardizing the future of legitimate farm programs by damaging the credibility of farm bills in general,” he said.

Congress has only overridden one veto, on a water projects bill, during Bush’s two terms.

Congressional negotiators met for weeks in an effort to come closer to the White House on the amount of money to be paid to wealthy farmers — one of the chief sticking points with the administration. But drastic cuts to subsidies were not possible, lawmakers said, because of the clout of Southern lawmakers who represent rice and cotton farms that are more expensive to run.

“This bill has reform in it,” said Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid. “Could we have done more? Perhaps. But if we’d done more we wouldn’t have gotten a bill.”

The legislation would make small cuts to direct payments that are distributed to some farmers no matter how much they grow. The farm bill also would eliminate some federal payments to individuals with more than \$750,000 in annual farm income — or married farmers who make more than \$1.5 million.

Individuals who make more than \$500,000 or couples who make more than \$1 million jointly in nonfarm income also would not be eligible for subsidies.

Under current law, there is no income limit for farmers receiving subsidies, and married couples who make less than one-fourth of their income from farming will not receive subsidies if their joint income exceeds \$5 million.

The administration originally proposed a cap for those who make more than \$200,000 in annual gross income, but later indicated it could accept a limit of \$500,000. Previously, negotiators were considering a \$950,000 income cap on farm income.

The bill also would:

- Boost nutrition programs, including food stamps and emergency domestic food aid, by more than \$10 billion over 10 years. It would expand a program to provide fresh fruits and vegetables to

schoolchildren.

- Increase subsidies for certain crops, including fruits and vegetables excluded from previous farm bills.
- Extend and expand dairy programs.
- Increase loan rates for sugar producers.
- Urge the government to buy surplus sugar and sell it to ethanol producers for use in a mixture with corn.
- Cut a per-gallon ethanol tax credit for refiners from 51 cents to 45 cents. The credit supports the blending of fuel with the corn-based additive. More money would go to cellulosic ethanol, made from plant matter.
- Require that meats and other fresh foods carry labels with their country of origin.
- Stop allowing farmers to collect subsidies for multiple farm businesses.
- Reopen a major discrimination case against the Agriculture Department. Thousands of black farmers who missed a deadline would get a chance to file claims alleging they were denied loans or other subsidies.
- Pay farmers for weather-related farm losses from a new \$3.8 billion disaster relief fund.
- Provide the first-ever infusion of federal farm dollars — more than \$400 million — to clean up the Chesapeake Bay.

The bill also includes a few home-state provisions inserted by lawmakers, including tax breaks for Kentucky racehorse owners and additional aid for salmon fishermen in the Pacific Northwest.

Despite the overwhelming vote, the bill does have some farm-state critics.

Indiana Sen. Richard Lugar, a former Republican chairman of the Senate Agriculture Committee, voted against the bill.

“I do not believe our nation is best served by this farm bill that continues to make payments that defy common sense, snubs our trading partners, and balloons taxpayer spending,” Lugar said.

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### Stamp Out Hunger: Numbers down for annual food drive

By JANE NORDBERG, DMG Writer

*POSTED: May 14, 2008*

HOUGHTON — Rising gas and food prices may have contributed to a decrease in food donations during last Saturday's "Stamp Out Hunger" food drive.

During the event, conducted by the National Association of Letter Carriers, more than 86 million pounds of food was collected nationwide, which is donated to local food banks. Residents were asked to leave a bag of non-perishable food by their mailbox Saturday, and letter carriers picked up the donations on their regular rounds.

Mail carrier Mark Schnabel, coordinator for the Houghton region, said the region collected about 2,050 pounds of food Saturday, down from 5,500 pounds of food last year.

Contributing to the decrease was Chassell's non-participation this year, however.

"Normally, our region also includes Chassell, which did not participate this year," he said. "They probably would have added another 2,000 pounds or so to our total."

Numbers were also down at the Calumet Post Office, which coordinates the northern regions of Houghton County and also Keweenaw County. About 7,700 pounds were collected there this year, contrasting with 12,815 pounds last year.

Hancock also saw a decrease, collecting 1,858 pounds versus last year's total of 5,800.

"It's hard to say what accounts for the decrease," Schnabel said. "We have to assume that everyone is tightening their belts. Food prices and gas prices are having an effect on everyone's budget."

Letter carriers picked up the food during regular delivery on Saturday and Monday. When trucks got full, volunteers in mini-vans and pick-ups were helping to regularly unload them and take the food to a sorting center.

In Calumet, the center was St. Paul the Apostle Church on Eighth Street, where food bank volunteers weighed, shelved and sorted the food into bags for distribution for local food recipients. Houghton's food is donated to the Community Action Agency, while Hancock's is given to St. Vincent de Paul, Schnabel said.

Regardless of the decrease, Schnabel said every box of macaroni and cheese or can of soup is truly appreciated.

"Many people and organizations help in this, and no matter what we get, it all goes for a good cause," he said. "Some years are lighter than others but we are still meeting our goal of helping those in need."

#### Article Photos



Jane Nordberg/Daily Mining Gazette  
Letter carrier George Capello, left, and volunteer Daryl Asunmaa unload bags of food from Capello's U.S. Mail truck on Rockland Street in Calumet Township Saturday during the Letter Carriers National Food Drive. Asunmaa took the donations to St. Paul the Apostle Church, where food bank volunteers weighed and sorted the food for distribution.

National sponsors include the National Association of Letter Carriers AFL-CIO, Campbell Soup Company, U.S. Postal Service, the United Way, America's Second Harvest, and Val-Pak Direct Marketing Systems Inc.

For more information, visit [www.helpstampouthunger.com](http://www.helpstampouthunger.com)

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## THE ANN ARBOR NEWS

### Cheap housing advised for Y site

Advisory panel will urge city to stick with its original plan

Thursday, May 15, 2008

BY JUDY MCGOVERN

The Ann Arbor News

An advisory board plans to recommend next week that the Ann Arbor City Council stick with its original plan and use the former YMCA site downtown to locate 100 units of low-income housing.

"Everything points to downtown," said Edward Staebler, one of 10 community members serving on the Housing and Human Services Advisory Board.

Everything, that is, except the cost.

Construction downtown would be 30 percent to 50 percent higher than in other parts of the city, board members estimate.

Still, advantages outweigh that initial cost, said Staebler, chairman of the group and a graduate of the London School of Economics who works for the Michigan Economic Development Corp.

Those advantages include access to services, the fact that the city already owns the property, and the downtown's capacity to absorb a population with special needs, Staebler said.

The 100-unit target represents the number of single rooms formerly provided by the YMCA. The Y operated a dorm adjacent to its recreation facilities before moving to a new facility.

Although that housing was shut down in late 2006, social-service agencies and others working to address homelessness say replacing the housing is critical. The Housing and Human Services Advisory Board memo says, for example, that wait lists for housing provided by organizations including Avalon Housing and the Ann Arbor Housing Commission have grown since the former Y dorm closed.

City officials paid \$3.5 million for the old YMCA property in late 2003 to ensure that the low-income housing would be replaced. A developer was selected to raze the old building and construct a facility that would include low-income, supported housing along with market-rate properties.

However, after several years of preliminary work, the City Council terminated an agreement with the developer, citing dissatisfaction with delays.

A contractor hired by the Downtown Development Authority is now completing demolition. City officials expect to put a temporary parking lot on the site and use it as a staging area for planned construction of an underground parking deck nearby on Fifth Avenue.

In the meantime, City Council members asked the Housing and Human Services Advisory Board to take a fresh look at whether Fifth and William was really the best place for replacement low-income housing.

After 12 weeks of study, the conclusion is clear, said Staebler.

"No one's saying to the council that it's the only site, but downtown is consistent with community values."

A downtown site would allow for a tower, desirable from a security point of view, he said. The Fifth and William property is also suitable for building on-site services, like social work and counseling, into the development.

The planned housing is intended to serve very low-income, single adults, the homeless and those who have the greatest difficulty maintaining stable housing.

To serve that special-needs population, rents would be \$200 to \$250 a month, said Jennifer Hall, housing manager for the city-county community development department. That means both the construction and ongoing operation of the residence would have to be subsidized.

"There certainly are alternate locations," said Staebler. "And if the city hits more roadblocks downtown, the City Council shouldn't wait."

The draft version of the recommendations includes two alternatives to a downtown location, identifying the pros and cons of each.

City Council Member Stephen Rapundalo said those alternatives are welcome, as they give city officials some flexibility.

And he sounded a caution on the Y site.

"I think there has to be a recognition that one site might be preferred by many, but circumstances may dictate multiple site or that we do what we can, when we can," said Rapundalo, one of two council members serving on the advisory board.

Judy McGovern can be reached at 734-994-6863 or [jmcgovern@annarbornews.com](mailto:jmcgovern@annarbornews.com).

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# Michigan Jobless Rate Declined in April

Last Update: 5/14 1:25 pm



LANSING, Mich. (AP) - Michigan's seasonally adjusted unemployment rate declined in April.

The state said Wednesday the jobless rate was 6.9 percent last month. That's down from the March rate of 7.2 percent, which was the nation's highest.

Manufacturing jobs continued to be lost in Michigan. There were 11,000 fewer manufacturing jobs reported in April in part because of ongoing labor disputes involving auto companies.

The state had 7,000 fewer construction jobs last month.

Michigan reported job gains in government and professional and business services.

The national unemployment rate for April was 5 percent.



## Obama vows to wage war on poverty

Thursday, May 15, 2008

**By Pat Shellenbarger**

**The Grand Rapids Press**

GRAND RAPIDS -- In a speech tailored to a Michigan audience and intended to unify the Democratic Party behind him, Sen. Barack Obama pledged to join his former opponent and latest supporter, former Sen. John Edwards, in a fight against poverty.

"You should never be hungry," Obama told the cheering Van Andel Arena crowd on Wednesday night. "You should never be homeless, you should never face the threat of poverty, ever!"

Assuming the tone of his party's presumptive nominee, he promised more affordable housing for low-income people, universal health care, early childhood education programs, tax breaks for middle income workers, an end to the war in Iraq in 2009 and \$4,000 in tuition credits for college students who perform community service.

"John Edwards and I both got into this race, because we both believe in an America where we can change things," Obama said, pointing particularly to Michigan's job losses of recent years. "For too long, Washington has ignored their struggles. For too long, they've been told, 'There's nothing we can do to help you.'"

"That's what George Bush has done for eight years, and that's what John McCain is offering for the next four years."

In keeping with that theme, Obama was introduced by a man who said he will lose his job in November when his Lear auto parts plant closes, moving production to Mexico.

His speech was interrupted repeatedly by chants of "Obama, Obama" and "Yes we can." The crowd included many young people waving signs saying "Change We Can Believe In." Many said they would be voting for the first time, drawn by Obama.

### **'Something special' for Michigan**

When Obama took the stage for his first public appearance in West Michigan, he offered an apology for not campaigning in the state sooner after the Democratic National Committee penalized Michigan for moving its primary earlier than party rules allowed.

"I felt guilty about not campaigning," he said, "so, as a consequence, I decided I would try to give you something special."

The crowd erupted in cheers as Edwards took the stage.

"The question is, what am I doing here?" Edwards said, then later answered: "The reason we are here tonight is the Democratic voters have made their choice, and so have I."

Rumors of Edwards' appearance swept the crowd several minutes before his plane landed at Gerald R. Ford International Airport. An Obama spokeswoman said the campaign talked with Edwards for some time about a possible endorsement.

Some Obama supporters felt the timing was significant, coming the day after Hillary Clinton's overwhelming

victory in the West Virginia primary. Edwards, while praising Clinton as "a woman of steel," offered an endorsement that could shore up Obama's support among blue-collar workers and low-income voters, who have tended to favor Clinton.

"I think it will help him immensely with the working men and women of America," said Brent Slay, a retired Plainfield Township businessman and Obama donor. "My opinion is Sen. Edwards saw Sen. Obama was going to be the candidate for the party, and he wanted to be the one to push him over the edge."

Slay wondered if the endorsement might signal an Obama-Edwards ticket, though Edwards has said he is not interested in running for vice president.

## **Two Americas**

Edwards repeated his theme about uniting the two Americas -- the haves and have-nots -- and tearing down the barriers he believes separates them.

"This is who we are," he said. "This is our moment to take down those walls and build one America.

"It's the moral shame of America that 37 million people wake up in poverty every day," Edwards said.

His backing could sway many more superdelegates to throw their support behind Obama, said Patrick Miles, a longtime Obama friend and Harvard law school classmate.

"It shows the party is coalescing around Sen. Obama as the presumptive nominee," he said.

Clinton campaign chairman Terry McAuliffe said in a statement, "We respect John Edwards but, as the voters of West Virginia showed last night, this thing is far from over."

At least one member of the crowd who played a prominent role in the program remained uncommitted following Obama's speech. Army National Guard Sgt. Herb Merten, of Hart, a veteran of the first Gulf War and the current Iraq War, was chosen by the West Michigan Plumbers and Pipe Fitters Union, of which he is a member, to offer the Pledge of Allegiance before Obama's appearance.

Merten said he suffers post-traumatic stress disorder. As he hobbled to the microphone on crutches due to a leg he broke in a recent fall from a ladder, the crowd broke into cheers. Before the speech, he said he was thinking of voting for McCain. Afterward, he remained uncommitted.

"He (Obama) said a lot of good things I wanted to hear," Merten said, "but he didn't say a lot of other things I wanted to hear. Why not tear up that NAFTA and bring a lot of jobs home? I need to hear something about NAFTA."

Edwards, who spoke 19 minutes, just two minutes less than Obama, predicted many who have remained on the sidelines or supported other candidates soon will rally behind Obama.

"When this nomination battle is over, and it will be over soon," he said, "brothers and sisters, we must come together as Democrats."

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